



Connecting Congo Mission

David Suze Manda, one of the founders of Connecting Congo, had the opportunity to travel to Moba-Port, DRC this past December. He spoke with community members and in many of the classrooms to find out what areas they would like to see improved. There was an immediate cry for an improvement in and access to their education system. Many were able to recognize the direct correlation between the lack of an innovative education system in DR Congo and the country's current state of turmoil and lack of development. David and Mary want to focus their efforts on one of the root causes and give people the resources they need to help empower them to become the change their country needs.

He spent 4 weeks researching the current situation and found it to be very disappointing. Very little, if anything at all, has changed since he attended school in Moba-Port over 15 years ago. Teachers are forced to teach in setups that are lacking very basic materials including textbooks, current information, and access to continued education. The textbooks that are scattered among the school district are over 30 years old and far and few between. Most teachers have to use the notes that they took when they were students, for their teaching materials. The lack of learning and teaching materials and reality of its impact, was made very real to Mary when one student heard that David was going to be travelling to Moba-Port and asked him to bring her a French dictionary. Out of all the things she could have asked for, the only thing she was wanting was a dictionary.

David and Mary decided to start a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization called Connecting Congo, an organization focused on improving the education system in rural areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Their first efforts are being focused on Moba-Port in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are currently travelling to Moba-Port to establish the first phase of an Internet Learning Center. They were able to collect 10 used laptops—many of them donated, and reformatted all of them. David installed different learning programs on the laptops including Microsoft Encarta Student Edition in French. Benches and tables are already being built for Connecting Congo's facility, by a local man in Moba-Port. David and Mary were unable to gather enough funds to establish an internet connection in Moba-Port this trip, but are hoping to be able to do so in the near future.

Having spent a lot of time talking with the residents in Moba-Port, the overall consensus was that the community of approximately 60,000 people also needs to have a bridge built over the Kizye River. It is approximately 10 meters wide and 5 meters in depth when at its highest. About 15 years ago, the previous bridge was washed out by the river's current and has never been replaced due to a lack of funding and resources. This particular river separates the main residential area from their farms, schools (high schools and elementary), cemetery, and churches.



When it rains abundantly, which is frequently does, the children and youth are unable to attend school. If they had already made it across the river before it rained, then they will consequently become trapped on the other side of the river and have to wait to cross it until the current slows down and the water recedes. This is devastating to their community and to their futures. One teenage boy in high school lamented to David about how difficult it is for them to get to school and how they just want to be able to learn so that they can help foster positive changes and development in their community.

Connecting Congo realized how important this bridge is to help provide an opportunity to consistent education. The students' ability to attend school should not be dictated by Mother Nature. Connecting Congo is currently trying to collect funds—a project estimated to cost \$10,000, to build a bridge across the Kizye River in order to improve access to education. Connecting Congo is hoping to hold its first annual 5K fun run-walk this October 10, 2010 called “Bridge to an Education.” Once Moba-Port’s Internet Learning Center is fully established, Connecting Congo will research and select another rural area in DRC to create opportunities for improved education.